



HOW **TECH SUPPORT LEADERS** CAN THRIVE WHILE DEALING WITH INCREASING COMPETITION FOR TALENT AND SKILLS

The benefits of upskilling and reskilling for tech support organizations in today's digital era



INTRODUCTION

Rapid digitalization is making most of our lives easier. Yet for tech support leaders, the increasing use of technology at work and home has ramped up the pressure on their departments.

As tech companies launch new products and services, tech support teams are required to handle a growing number of cases but with continual pressure on budgets. There's also an increasing demand for qualified front line team members to provide customers with the support they need. But with the lack of career progression for support staff being a major contributor to attrition, tech support leaders face the never ending cycle of hiring to replace attrition, hiring for growth, and then losing people just as they develop the necessary skills.

While a widening digital skills gap and high cost of attrition could overwhelm many tech support organizations, there are ways that progressive tech support leaders can overcome the pressures and actively thrive despite the current challenges.

THE ORIGIN OF THE ISSUE

The [Fourth Industrial Revolution](#) is reshaping our economic and social lives. Characterized by the “convergence of digital, biological, and physical innovations”, this new digital era brings huge potential advantages and represents a fundamental change in the way we live, work and do business.

The technology companies at the forefront of this transformation are adapting rapidly and launching new products and services every day. Tech support organizations must keep up—especially if they are to take advantage of what [McKinsey](#) calls, “a one-time opportunity to harness disruption and ride the digital wave, setting up their customer and back-of-house operations to deliver enhanced experience and productivity benefits to lead the competition in the next normal.”

Yet, there is a significant—and growing—problem that is already preventing tech support organizations following the opportunities that the Fourth Industrial Revolution is opening up. As the world tries to adapt to systemic change across so many areas of human life, we are left with a digital skills shortage.

Put simply, there are not enough people with the required skills to fill the primary, secondary and tertiary roles that the Fourth Industrial Revolution is creating. As tech companies launch new artificial intelligence (AI) based tools or automation capabilities, they need the support structures to ensure customers continue to get what they need (rather than new technology related headaches).

For tech support organizations, the digital skills shortage creates significant problems in terms of meeting business needs right now and further down the line. So what can be done?



NEW PROSPECTS, NEW PROBLEMS?

The rapid emergence of the Fourth Industrial Revolution has created massive opportunities. Every aspect of our lives is changing thanks to technological advances that affect the ways we live and work.

As individuals, we will continue to benefit from the merging of the physical, digital and biological worlds. Digitization, automation, high interconnectivity, AI, robotics and other rapid advances are combining to transform society on a global scale.

But there are two sides to the coin, as the [World Economic Forum](#) explains: “Business model disruptions will have a profound impact on the employment landscape in many sectors, leading to similarly significant and simultaneous job creation and elimination, potentially heightened productivity, and wider gaps between existing skills and those most desired.”

The constant state of change in technological developments is creating widening skills gaps that governments and enterprises are struggling to fill. While market analysts such as [PwC](#) highlight the importance of particular technologies that are driving the Fourth Industrial Revolution, they also point out that, “To thrive, companies need to focus on their people as much as on their technology.”

In previous industrial eras, it might have taken decades to establish the training and supporting infrastructure to help people develop new skills and stem old job losses on a large scale. However, the pace of the Fourth Industrial Revolution does not afford the same time to today’s enterprises. For tech support organizations on the frontline of change, competition for talent is fierce and skills that are in short supply quickly become valuable or expensive commodities.

With new products and services being launched all of the time—from autonomous vehicles and manufacturing robotics through to integrated healthcare and Infrastructure as a Service—there is a kind of snowball effect in which people with the right skills are drawn in by the gathering momentum. The combination of this rapid, all-consuming transformation coupled with the time it takes for newly qualified people to enter the job market are the key factors behind the widening digital skills gap.



What is clear is that when there are not enough trained people out there on the market, the digital skills gap cannot be addressed simply by hiring people alone. Automation and the digitization of everyday work is putting pressure on organizations to upskill and reskill their current employee base to ensure higher digital dexterity and confidence, fill new job roles and evolve current positions.

As the [World Economic Forum](#) concludes, “In order to successfully meet this challenge, businesses will have to recognize and invest in their people as a valuable asset, rather than see them as a potential liability... Real solutions will require that proactive talent management strategies be deployed by companies, alongside deep and sustained dialogue and collaboration with governments and education providers.”

In particular, tech support organizations—whose business models are intrinsically linked to the strategic direction of global enterprises—will need to gain more control over the skills within their own organizations to be able to adapt to current and future business needs.

Those looking to gain the right skills to compete in the Fourth Industrial Revolution must look internally and ask some key questions:

“How can we onboard the right people, and in the right ways, to match them to current and future skills requirements?”

“How do we go about recognizing which groups of people within our existing staff are the right ones for a particular upskilling or reskilling initiative?”

“How can we design these initiatives so that **(a)** they work on an individual level and **(b)** they address actual demand for tech support?”

CLOSING THE GAP BY FINDING THE ANSWERS

Smart workforce strategies will enable organizations to address the challenges and opportunities of the Fourth Industrial Revolution by growing from within the skills and talent they need for current and future roles.

In a [report by INSEAD](#) on the most talent competitive countries, the authors suggest that talent mobility within companies will look different but remain important in the future saying, “Multinational organisations are rethinking their relocation and expatriation strategies for high potentials. Overall, we believe those organisations that focus on outcomes and flexibility will attract the best and the brightest.”

These agile organizations are looking for employees who want to learn and grow with the business, creating a reliable pool of talent that evolves with the changing needs of the company. At the same time, they must identify the skills gaps between current and future states, while pinpointing which employees have the ideal profile to upskill and reskill to specific roles. They also need to be able to monitor the effectiveness of these programs to be able to make adjustments and continue to get ‘value by performance’ from training investment.

41% of workers were considering quitting or changing professions this year [2021]

Source: [Microsoft](#)



Progressive tech support organizations that recognize the immediate need for new skills and are willing to adapt can follow three core principles to thrive where others may fail in the Fourth Industrial Revolution:

1

Identify who has the ideal profile to upskill and reskill to specific roles

The traditional approach to rapidly acquiring skills would have been to hire new people. Yet skills shortages make this an expensive option for tech support organizations. While there is a growing recognition of the issues, there is still plenty of confusion as to how to solve it. According to a [McKinsey Global Survey](#) on future workforce needs, “Although most respondents say their organizations consider it a priority to address skill shortages, few say their organizations understand how to equip themselves with the workforce skills they will need most.”

So organizations that are able to move away from simply ‘getting people through the door’ and focus instead on what their current and future business needs are will already be one step ahead. Knowing the skills already available within the organization and how to build on these when new opportunities arise will put them further ahead. Having a breakdown of validated skills within the organization also enables HR and business leaders to understand who can easily upskill or reskill to cover new projects or roles.



2

Use data to design effective reskilling and upskilling initiatives

The ability of employees to reach competency in the fastest time, and at scale, is another competitive differentiator for tech support organizations in the current skills climate. Yet many will continue to take one of two approaches to reskilling and upskilling. They will either enforce a top-down approach to address a specific gap in skills without looking at the longer-term needs of individuals. Or they will place the onus on the individual to find the training (and complete it) despite the lack of clear organizational goals.

By addressing individual learning needs and skills gaps together rather than the employee and the organization going off in different directions, tech support organizations can improve time to competency. This requires a degree of flexibility in the form of personalized learning journeys that automatically select the most effective training to follow next to address an individual's skills gaps in line with their own career path.

As one [example from Training Industry](#) highlights, "A learner who struggles with listening can be offered visual or tactile content. AI-powered technology can also be used to track performance and continually adjust content, so that learners are working right at the edge of their abilities."

It also requires the breakdown of skills highlighted above as well as upskilling and reskilling performance data in the form of competency tracking. This twin approach enables tech support organizations to adapt to the needs of individuals while gaining the agility to react in near real-time to emerging business needs.



3

Show people they have a future in your organization

One of the most significant barriers to widespread skills adoption and the ability to serve customers is when the organization cannot hold on to top performers. To put it bluntly, it makes no sense investing in reskilling or upskilling initiatives if people still feel like they need to leave to further their careers.

Attrition in frontline work like tech support remains high and the 'Great Resignation' has only made the situation more acute. According to one [Microsoft survey](#) of more than 30,000 global workers, "41% of workers were considering quitting or changing professions this year [2021]." While [U.S. Bureau of Labor statistics](#) highlighted that 4.6 million U.S. employees quit their jobs in September 2021 alone—a record monthly high.

Competitive salaries and benefits alone are no longer the way to attract and retain the people you need. The Gen Z workers are looking for more, and often put compensation further down their criteria list. Focusing on transparent career journeys and personal growth is the key driver to hiring and retention today.

One report by Entrepreneur Europe highlighted that, "70% of employees say job-related training and development influenced their decision to stay in their job." Another study quoted by Forbes shows how, "Employees with access to development opportunities have 34% higher retention and are 15% more engaged."

Providing transparent career paths can be set the organization apart in both attracting and retaining the right people. This could include intuitive ways for people to see how the skills they are acquiring are leading them towards other roles. It could include the ability to track top performers to recognize when an individual is ready for their next role. On the flip side, it could also include measures to identify those people at risk of leaving so the organization can address their specific circumstances.

COMPETENCIES AND COMPETITIVENESS

The core principles outlined here should not be viewed in isolation. They combine to produce a cumulative effect that offers organizations more than a just theoretical approach to solving the wider issue of a global digital skills shortage. Instead there are practical ways that organizations—especially tech support organizations—can address their own digital skills gaps and thrive in the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

Those progressive tech support organizations that are prepared to make the investment will experience the returns right now and way into the future:

1

By being able to meet immediate business needs while reducing the cost of new hires and attrition

2

By keeping hold of top performers and those with the propensity to adapt as roles change

3

By proactively building up the organizational agility to respond to the continuing changes in business needs that will typify the age of the Fourth Industrial Revolution





ABOUT TALENTWIZE

Talentwize is a talent growth solution that gives you a strategic way to know, grow and retain world-class teams through personalized learning journeys and career paths.

It shines a light on precisely which skills you already have across your teams. Our assessment tools reveal any skills gaps so you can easily develop the competencies you need to meet changing business needs. With insights into what already exists, you can establish upskilling and reskilling initiatives to address skills gaps at scale. And you can enable personalized learning journeys for every employee to boost loyalty and reduce attrition.

Put simply, Talentwize is a talent growth solution that helps you know your people, grow your people, and retain your people.

Get in touch to find out more

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